

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 AID-05

PC-01 EB-07 COME-00 SIL-01 LAB-04 /069 W

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R 012255Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 009

INFO AMCONSUL CALI

AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 7255

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINT CO VE PN

SUBJ: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. MOOD. THE LOPEZ ADMINISTRATION ENJOYED AN ATMOSPHERE OF SUCCESSFUL ACCOMPLISHMENT AND GOOD FEELING BY WEEK'S END. THE PRESIDENT CONTINUED TO BENEFIT FROM HIGHLY FAVORABLE REACTIONS FROM VIRTUALLY ALL SECTORS TO HIS MONUMENTAL JULY 20 SPEECH AT THE OPENING OF CONGRESS (BOGOTA 6886). THE SANTA MARTA CONFERENCE WENT WELL FOR THE PRESIDENT, WHO CAPABLY DEFENDED OR ADVANCED HIS POLICIES AND COLOMBIA'S INTERESTS, ALTHOUGH HE MAY HAVE RAISED UNDULY COLOMBIAN EXPECTATIONS AND VENEZUELAN ANXIETIES WITH HIS CONDOMINIUM PROPOSAL (BOGOTA 7217). THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT WHOLESALE PRICE INCREASES DURING THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF THE YEAR WERE SUBSTANTIALLY LESS THAN IN PREVIOUS YEARS PROMISED SOME LIKELIHOOD OF FURTHER RELIEF IN CONSUMER PRICE INCREASES AND IN INFLATION. GREATLY IMPROVED TAX RECEIPTS, AS A RESULT OF LAST FALL'S FISCAL REFORM MEASURES, AND THE PROSPECT OF INCREASED EXPORT EARNINGS FOR COLOMBIAN COFFEE DUE TO THE FREEZE IN BRAZIL AND TROUBLES IN ANGOLA FURTHER BUOYED CONFIDENCE IN GOVERNMENT AND ECONOMIC CIRCLES. THERE WAS, HOWEVER, CONTINUING AND PERHAPS HEIGHTENED CONCERN OVER SECURITY. THE PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL CONSERVATIVE DIRECTORATE CALLED ON THE NEWLY-APPOINTED CONSERVATIVE JUSTICE MINISTER HOYOS ARANGO

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TO "PULL OUT ALL STOPS" IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CRIME. BOGOTA'S

MAYOR TOLD A MEETING OF THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF MERCHANTS THAT THE CITY WAS FACED BY AN UNPRECEDENTED WAVE OF CRIME. AT WEEK'S END IT WAS STILL NOT CLEAR WHETHER THE MASSACRE OF ELEVEN PEASANTS AT OTANCHE ON JULY 26 (BOGOTA 7149) WAS THE WORK OF FARC GUERRILLAS OR CRIMINALS, ALTHOUGH THE MODUS OPERANDI INDICATED THAT THE LATTER WERE RESPONSIBLE. THE PACKAGE OF LABOR REFORM PROPOSALS PENDING BEFORE THE CONGRESS ALSO CAUSED MUCH CONCERN TO BUSINESS AND EMPLOYER CIRCLES. (BOGOTA 7011). A TRAGICOMIC EPISODE AFFORDED AN INSIGHT INTO OFFICIAL INSENSITIVITY TO THE HUMAN CONDITION WHEN SANTA MARTA AUTHORITIES, AS PART OF PRE-CONFERENCE HOUSE CLEANING, ROUNDED UP SOME TWO DOZEN URCHINS AND MENDICANTS AND, WITHOUT FOOD, WATER OR WARM CLOTHING, FORCEABLY EMBARKED THEM ON THE 24-HOUR TRAIN TRIP TO BOGOTA. THE BOGOTA AUTHORITIES IMMEDIATELY ATTEMPTED TO REPATRIATE THEM TO SANTA MARTA AND AT LENGTH SUCCEEDED DESPITE THE FACT THAT RAILROAD AUTHORITIES AT FIRST REFUSED TO EXTEND CREDIT TO BOGOTA FOR THE TICKETS. END MOOD.

2. LABOR PACKAGE CONTINUES IN CONTROVERSIAL SPOTLIGHT. DURING THE WEEK THE TECHNICAL COMMISSION OF THE SENATE ISSUED AN ANALYSIS OF SEVERAL OF THE PROPOSALS IN THE SO-CALLED "LABOR PACKAGE" BEFORE THE CONGRESS, ASSESSING SOME OF THEM AS POTENTIALLY INFLATIONARY, OTHERS AS POSSIBLE IMPEDIMENTS TO THE FUNCTION OF THE GOC IN THE LABOR FIELD, AND STILL OTHERS AS SIMPLY IMPRACTICAL. MEANWHILE, ORGANIZED LABOR ESTABLISHED A "PRO-LABOR LEGISLATION COMMITTEE" TO COUNTER WHAT APPEARS TO BE GROWING PUBLIC OPPOSITION TO THE LEGISLATION. BOTH ORGANIZED LABOR AND BUSINESS REPS CONTINUED TO BE OPTIMISTIC THAT THE CONGRESS WOULD ULTIMATELY GRANT PRESIDENT LOPEZ EXTRAORDINARY POWERS TO DEAL WITH PROPOSED REFORMS. NEVERTHELESS, MEMBERS OF THE LABOR COMMISSIONS IN EACH HOUSE RESTATED THEIR VIEWS INITIALLY EXPRESSED LAST WEEK THAT THE CONGRESS WOULD NGG GIVE THE PRESIDENT THESE POWERS. SEASONED MEMBERS OF THE CONGRESS TOLD THE EMBASSY THAT WHILE THESE COMMISSIONS DEAL WITH LABOR, CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONS, SUCH AS EXTRAORDINARY POWERS, ARE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE FIRST COMMISSION. AT THE END OF THE WEEK, CONGRESS ADJOURNED FOR EIGHT DAYS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE GOC-SPONSORED "TWO COLOMBIAS' MEETING" (RURAL AND URBAN) CONVENED TO COMMEMORATE PRESIDENT LOPEZ' FIRST YEAR IN OFFICE. SENATE PRESIDENT BALCAZAR ANNOUNCED THAT THE PERIOD WOULD BE USED BY

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SOME MEMBERS OF THE SENATE FOR THE THOROUGH STUDY, UNDER HIS DIRECTION, OF THE LABOR PACKAGE.  
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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, POLITICAL SITUATION  
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**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** GolinoFR  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
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**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
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**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
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**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
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**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** GolinoFR  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 05 SEP 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <05 SEP 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <17 NOV 2003 by GolinoFR>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
06 JUL 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA  
**TAGS:** PFOR, PINT, CO, VE, PN  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006